

Commission Open House—December 6, 2000

On December 6, 2000, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women hosted an Open House at our new office in the Charles F. Hurley Building in Boston. Legislators, representatives from community groups and state agencies, and individuals from the community were invited to see our new offices and meet staff and Commissioners. Over 140 people attended.

Commissioners and staff met and mingled with attendees. A short program honored three outgoing Commissioners— Beth Boland, Meiling Hazelton, and Marlyn McGrath Lewis. Also included in the program was a review of the four Commission hearings held in 2000 and the issues most frequently raised at the hearings. See inside for the list of the top ten issues raised at the hearings.



(From left to right) Commissioners: Helen Jackson, Mary Clare Higgins, Susana Segat, Pat Hendel (President, National Association of Commissions for Women) Roseanna Means, Barbara Gomes-Beach, Angela Menino, Kathleen Casavant, Kateri Walsh, Donna Finneran



Commissioner Sandra Jesse Carter, outgoing Commissioner Beth Boland, Commissioner Helen Jackson

Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women
The Charles F. Hurley Building
19 Staniford St., 6th Floor
Boston, MA 02114



Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women Newsletter

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The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women was enacted by law in 1998. It is a government agency dedicated to providing a permanent, effective voice for women across Massachusetts. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, and the full enjoyment of life for all women throughout their lives. The Commission is an independent state agency, consisting of 19 commissioners from across the state. Four governing authorities appoint the Commissioners: the Governor, the Senate President, the Speaker of the House and the Caucus of Women Legislators.

The year 2000 was marked by many meaningful milestones for the Commission— continuing monthly Commissioner meetings, instituting Commission governance, establishing office space in the Charles F. Hurley Building, hiring staff, meeting with individuals and organizations around the state through public hearings, launching a website, creating an information clearinghouse, and hosting an Open House to celebrate our accomplishments thus far. Read on to find out more about the Commission's activities in 2000 and to see what we have planned for 2001.

Letter from Executive Director, Priscilla Golding

Welcome to the first edition of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women Newsletter. I want to let you know about the ongoing activities sponsored by the Commission. First is our database of organizations that serve women and girls. This statewide list includes government agencies, nonprofit organizations as well as community and religious groups. The database is organized by the topics relevant to the group's activities. There are 22 categories ranging from Advocacy to Violence. Many groups fall under a number of topics. In conjunction with the database is a clearinghouse, which is a file system at the office. Our goal is to have a file on all entries in the database. We are moving quickly toward that goal. Also ongoing is the Commission website. All of our programs as well as information about other women and girl activities, including a page on innovative government projects, are available on the site.

The Commission office has a wonderful staff, which has quite rapidly become a productive team. Pam Mutascio, an intern from Simmons College, has been with us the longest, since April 2000. Pam is responsible for establishing the database and currently provides assistance to the Legislative Subcommittee. Heidi Kruckenberg, who is currently on maternity leave, began this past May. As Program Coordinator Heidi is responsible for both the program activities and the communications including the design of our website. Melixza Gonzalez, our Administrative Assistant, has worked at the Commission since July. She manages most of the day-to-day activities of the office, as well as our interaction with the public. A number of interns have assisted us during the past year. Currently Cecilia Blaine, Center for Women in Politics at UMass Boston and Vicky Hush, Boston University are with us. Cecilia is working on the clearinghouse and the Girls' Hearing. Vicky is assisting the Legislative Subcommittee. Rachel Schwartz, Megan Conley, and Cheryl Siegel have also interned with the Commission. We appreciate all the interns' hard work and enthusiasm on behalf of the Commission.

Letter from the Chair, Susana Segat

As Chair of the Commission I am pleased with the work we have accomplished in 2000 and I look forward to a successful and productive 2001. You may wonder how the Commission is structured to allow for volunteer Commissioners to get so much work done. The full Commission meets once a month, usually the fourth Wednesday from 4-6 p.m. to take care of normal Commission business. But, the Commission's work is facilitated by subcommittees, which also meet monthly. The current subcommittees are: Executive, Legislative, Budget, Education/Public Relations, Personnel, and Planning. Each Commissioner serves on at least one subcommittee. The Commissioners bring a wide range of personal and professional experiences, which have enriched the development of the new Commission.

In order to learn about the concerns of women and girls in Massachusetts we held four public hearings around the state, beginning in Springfield and Pittsfield last spring and visiting Lawrence and New Bedford in the fall. Our next public hearing, to be held in Boston, will focus on issues facing girls. Public Hearings will be ongoing, continuing on the Cape this spring.

Visit our website at www.state.ma.us/women

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women
The Charles F. Hurley Building
19 Staniford St., 6th Floor
Boston, MA 02114

phone: 617-626-6520
email: mcsw@state.ma.us

fax: 617-626-6530
website: www.state.ma.us/women

Public Hearings 2000

Last year the Commission held hearings in Springfield, Lawrence, Pittsfield, and New Bedford. These public hearings are designed to give women and girls a forum to discuss important issues in their lives. The information gained from these hearings is vital because it allows the Commission to focus on the most pressing issues facing women and girls in Massachusetts. A variety of women's issues were consistently raised at all of the hearings, such as domestic violence, reproductive rights, and housing. (See Top Ten Issues Raised below.)

Summary of Hearings

Springfield—June 5
Number of Attendees: 19
Number of Testimonies: 9
Key Issues: Domestic Violence, Girls Issues, Housing

Pittsfield—June 28
Number of Attendees: 30
Number of Testimonies: 14
Key Issues: Support for Particular Legislation, Domestic Violence, Economic Development/Stability

Lawrence—October 18
Number of Attendees: 51
Number of Testimonies: 24
Key Issues: Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault, Health Care/Reproductive Health, Housing

New Bedford—November 15
Number of Attendees: 42
Number of Testimonies: 27
Key Issues: Child Care, Health Care/Reproductive Health, Domestic Violence, Welfare Reform

Download complete reports from these hearings at:
www.state.ma.us/women



Commissioners hear testimony at the Springfield hearing. (from left) Kateri Walsh, Mary Reardon Johnson, Minosca Alcantara, Susana Segat, Roseanna Means, Beth Boland, Barbara Gomes-Beach

Top Ten Issues Raised at Commission Hearings 2000 (based on frequency)

1. Violence Against Women— *prevalence statewide especially in isolated areas; ignorance of courts; negative economic consequences; inadequate numbers of shelters/services; lack of safe neutral visitation; impact on children as victims and witnesses; lack of enforcement by local officials in small towns; date rape; violence against girls at schools; teen boys excluded from family shelters; inadequate wages for workers; role of TV violence*
2. Girls' Issues— *gender-specific program support; safe places to meet/play; self-esteem building; sexual harassment; teen girls' issues*
3. Support for Particular Legislation— *gender neutral insurance; insurance contraception coverage*
4. Child Care— *access; cost; inadequate workers' wages*
5. Reproductive Rights— *abortion access; contraception access; insurance coverage*
6. Welfare Reform— *its negative consequences*
7. Transportation— *cost; access; limited schedules*
8. Health Care— *access; availability especially for part-time workers; alternative approaches*
9. Economic Parity— *self-sufficiency for women*
10. Affordable Housing— *lack of; homelessness*

Come to our Public Hearing about girls' issues on March 15, 2001

See the calendar of March events for more information

March Is National Women's History Month!

National Women's History Month began in 1978 as a single week and in Sonoma County, California, to promote the teaching of women's history in elementary and high school curriculums. This first Women's History week coincided with International Women's Day (March 8). In 1981 Rep. Barbara Mikulski and Sen. Orrin Hatch cosponsored a Joint Congressional Resolution proclaiming the week of March 8 National Women's History Week. In 1987 Congress expanded the resolution to include the entire month of March as National Women's History Month. The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women is co-sponsoring several events in March to celebrate Women's History Month. See the calendar below for more details.

Calendar of Events—March 2001

March 8, 5:30-7:00 p.m. *International Women's Day Event: Personal Stories of Working Women Around the World.* Suggested donation \$5 at the door. Simmons College, Conference Center, 3rd Floor, 300 The Fenway, Boston, MA. 02115. RSVP to the Commission office at 617-626-6520 or mcsww@state.ma.us

March 15, 3:00-6:00 p.m. *Public Hearing in Boston focusing on Girls' Issues.* In collaboration with the women's commissions from Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville and the Girls' Coalition of Greater Boston. Roxbury Community College, Student Center Room 200, 1234 Columbus Avenue, Roxbury Crossing, MA 02120. Please RSVP to the Commission Office at 617-626-6520 or mcsww@state.ma.us

March 28, 4:00-6:00 p.m. *Monthly Commissioner Meeting.* The Hurley Building. 19 Staniford St. Rm. 307, Boston, MA 02114. Call the Commission Office for more information at 617-626-6520.

March 29, 4:00-6:00 p.m. *An Afternoon with Massachusetts Women Legislators.* In collaboration with the Massachusetts and Boston branch of the American Association of University Women, Girls' Coalition of Greater Boston, and the Massachusetts Association of Older Americans. State House, Great Hall, Boston, MA 02133.

Did You Know . . .

The first International Women's Day was held on March 8, 1911 and celebrated primarily in Europe. The day has roots in 1857, when American women demonstrated against poor working conditions and low wages. In 1975 the United Nations began sponsoring International Women's Day. Today International Women's Day celebrations are held worldwide to recognize women's achievements.

Commissioners

Minosca Alcántara
Sandra Jesse Carter
Kathleen Casavant
Donna Finneran
Marianne Fleckner
Mary Ann Glendon
Barbara Gomes-Beach
Mary Clare Higgins
Frances Hogan
Helen Jackson
Mary Reardon Johnson
Roseanna Means
Angela Menino
Susana Segat
Jo Anne Thompson
Gwendolyn Tyre
Kateri Walsh

Officers

Susana Segat, *Chair*
Roseanna Means,
Vice Chair
Minosca Alcántara,
Treasurer
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Secretary

Staff

Priscilla Golding,
Executive Director
Heidi Kruckenberg,
Program Coordinator
Melixza Gonzalez,
Administrative Assistant
Pam Mutascio, *Intern*
Cecilia Blaine, *Intern*
Vicky Hush, *Intern*